

PRESS RELEASE

Recent BIR World Recycling Convention & Exhibition in Miami (1-4 June 2014)

E-scrap Committee:

Major strides in e-scrap handling over the last decade

Brussels, 13 June 2014

Volumes of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) are rising rapidly - especially in emerging countries - and yet "there is not really a level playing field" when it comes to treatment standards, it was alleged at the latest BIR E-Scrap Committee meeting by Volker Pawlitzki, Senior Vice President of the Recycling/Precious Metals Business Unit of major Germany-based refiner Aurubis.

But while agreeing that certain operators continue to employ rudimentary processing techniques, the US Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries' President Robin Wiener underlined to the meeting in Miami on June 2 that substantial progress has been made in the handling of e-scrap over the last 10 years, with new technological innovations and standards adopted in many countries.

Also at the meeting chaired by Thomas Papageorgiou of Anamet in Greece, a snapshot of the situation in India was provided by Surendra Borad of Belgium-based Gemini Corporation NV. Only 5% of the e-waste generated in the country is recycled within the formal sector or by institutional processing and a further 5-8% goes to landfill, but the remainder - equivalent to approaching 90% of the total - is being handled by the informal sector. However, the guest speaker assured delegates that big business in India is now prepared to invest significant sums in this sector.

For India, a key development came in 2011 with the Electronic Waste (Management and Handling) Rules applicable to all producers, dealers, e-waste collection centres and manufacturers. This calls for all e-waste generated during the manufacturing process to be sent to appropriate formal recyclers or disposal

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facilities, while all stakeholders must register with their respective State Pollution Control Board or Pollution Control Committee, and maintain records of the e-waste collected. Illegal imports into India are “difficult if not impossible”, Mr Borad added.

Manuel Burnand of Derichebourg in France spoke about the development of Best Available Techniques (BATs) for the recycling of fridges, freezers and air-conditioning units as part of the work taking place within the EU to produce a BAT reference document for shredding of metal waste. It is planned to send detailed questionnaires to reference plants over the coming months to obtain feedback on key issues such as emissions to the environment. The objective is to compile a first draft of the reference document by late 2014/early 2015. Companies operating specialist fridge/freezer recycling plants in the EU were advised to contact efr@efr2.org to access the draft BAT document.

In summarising developments at the UN-EP Basel Convention regarding transboundary movement of electrical and electronic goods and e-scrap/e-waste, BIR’s Environmental & Technical Director Ross Bartley informed delegates in Miami that an intercessional working group is now assessing whether controls should be applied to: equipment on lease; equipment on warranty going for repair; and equipment destined for root cause analysis.

The meeting closed with a request from Ms Wiener for interested parties to approach BIR with suggestions of potential areas of activity for the E-Scrap Committee. Issues already earmarked include data gathering and the compilation of a “menu” of the e-scrap standards and certifications available globally.

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